

Review of *Sleepfaring: A Journey Through the Science of Sleep*

By Jim Horne, Oxford University Press; 2006

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"SLEEPFARING" IS A DELIGHTFUL WORD, INVENTED FOR THIS BOOK'S TITLE, INSPIRED BY "SLEEP" PLUS THE OLD ENGLISH MEANINGS FOR "FARE" (JOURNEY and health). It's a great title for this book that makes for wonderfully colorful reading. The volume consists of 23 chapters, 258 pages, with an index and an appendix of a short version of the Owls and Larks morningness-eveningness scale. While reading, one can easily imagine Professor Horne moving around the lecture hall stage, speaking from the podium and pacing periodically away from it, delivering a well-prepared lecture, peppered with humor, to a rapt audience of undergraduates. Professor Horne delivers fact, conjecture, and anecdote in a very engaging manner, stimulating controversy and inspiring debate. The book's target audience is the lay reader, and one can easily envision the book as material for a college student book club debate or as supplemental reading for a sleep and cognition course.

Professor Horne's journey skims across some basic phylogeny and ontogeny of sleep, sleep modulating substances, and then moves to the heart of the topic, sleep loss. A historical view of the works and times of Patrick and Gilbert, an account of Randy Gardner and the legendary sleep deprivation marathons, hypnagogic and hypnopompic illusions and hallucinations. We read through accounts of sleep's role in growth and restoration, signs and symptoms associated with sleepiness, including yawning. Human performance during sleep deprivation, including frontal lobe functioning, and the problem of stress (and the absence of stress) in studying the effects of sleep loss in humans is discussed. Along this journey Professor Horne illustrates the topic of sleepiness and driver safety and the issue of responsibility with one anecdote among many, of a driver who drove with her hair clamped in the sunroof so that when she dropped her head in sleep onset, the tug on her hair would wake her up! Anecdotes like this are sure to get the class discussions rolling. Dr. Horne moves on to cover body movements in sleep, brain waves, sleep stages, sleep patterns across the life span and dreams. He discusses sleep duration and sleep need, insomnia, sleep hygiene, bed bugs, and beds.

Then Professor Horne turns to sleep disordered breathing, periodic leg movements in sleep, and finally sleep in children and adolescents. All in all, a very broad range of information covered along the journey, with humor and wit throughout.

Covering a complicated behavior and broad field of science such as sleep in lay terms is not an easy task. Professor Horne attempts to balance educating about sleep and sleep disorders and reassuring those worried about loss of sleep, particularly REM sleep. Those suffering from primary insomnia, obsessed with sleep quality and quantity, up at night because of an inability to get back to sleep and reading this book because of it, may find a little levity and education in these pages. While on the one hand the appeasement of the insomniac who obsesses over sleep loss and worries endlessly over an accruing sleep deficit may be beneficial for many sufferers, it must be acknowledged that sleep disorders are complex, and sleep is an area where our introspection may not be as useful as for other areas of medicine. Waking up at night is a symptom that individuals may be aware of; cessation of breathing is one they very often do not have conscious access to. Working on jigsaw puzzles is an untested but potentially excellent treatment for some who are having trouble sleeping at night, but probably not most. From the perspective of a sleep scientist it is not a trivial exercise to reconcile the balance between telling sleepy drivers they are responsible and will be accountable for their own behavior, while at the same time telling insomniacs that they are fine with the amount of sleep they are getting. We don't know enough about individual differences in response to sleep loss with respect to neurocognitive throughput, psychosocial functioning, or long term health risk with respect to cardiovascular, metabolic, or other systems. In addition, we don't know how many of those lay people reading this book for instance, suffer from insomnia alone, or have comorbidities unbeknownst to them.

In short, this book is written with opinion laid openly on the table. This will not be a scientific reference book, nor does it provide depth of medical information for the sleep disorders patient or parents of children with serious sleep problems. It will not be a book for the sleep specialist to recommend his/her patients, and it is not intended as such. What it is, is a richly anecdotal, colorful, and controversy-inspiring book for the budding student of sleep/wake behavior. This is a book that may be useful to help infuse educational debate and discussion of important issues, a useful springboard for the undergraduate level reader or class.

Disclosure Statement

Dr. Mullington has participated in a speaking engagement for Takeda; has participated in an educational meeting for Sanofi-Aventis; and has participated in a board to create an educational fellowship for Jazz Pharmaceuticals.

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